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ABSTRACT

This paper describes one university's efforts to bring real-world learning experiences to educational administration students. A joint departmental interaction in training future teachers and administrators led to the design of common experiences that would benefit both student populations. In an Analysis of Teacher Behaviors course, graduate students (future practicing administrators) focused on traits of effective teachers as they developed potential interview questions to aid screening potential candidates. They also designed a record-keeping device that recorded individual panelist observations and provided a consensus panel evaluation to be given to the teacher candidates. Undergraduate teacher education students, in a course on the principles of teaching high school, used an interview activity to determine their responses to different situations. In a following semester, administration students participated in interview panels in which they rated undergraduate teacher candidates. Appended are the interview rater data sheet, interview feedback comments, undergraduate participant comments on the interview experience, and a sample of graduate administration students' reactions to this learning experience. (SM)

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# The Two Sided Mirror: Bringing A Real World Learning Experience to Pre-Service Undergraduate Students and Graduate Students in Educational Administration

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Imagine the emotions experienced by a first time loan seeker as he/she sits in front of a bank officer, while waiting to find out if he/she has been approved for a loan. Correspondingly, the loan officer sitting across from the potential borrower also is confronting similar emotions, particularly if this interaction represents his/her first time to negotiate a loan with a customer. In this imaginary exchange, both parties have emotions and questions spinning about in their heads. For the loan officer such issues as do I have sufficient data on this party to either authorize or reject the loan application? For the potential borrower, what information will they want from me or what else can I provide them in the way of information that will ensure that I receive the loan?

Interestingly, similar questions and emotions abound for both first time seekers of teaching positions and first time administrators seeking to employ quality teachers to ensure that students in their schools are afforded a quality, success oriented learning experience. Indeed, it is just that state of emotional and experiential dissonance that future student teachers and administrators experience as they proceed through their respective training programs prior to engaging in their first time interview experience. There they are, the two players in this employment process, one desiring the job, the other wanting to find just that right teacher, who will be the catalyst for effecting the administrator's vision of quality education within the school setting.

Contained within the preceding scheme exist the problems which must be addressed within specific courses associated with the preparation of both parties, i.e., the future teacher and the future administrator. The authors of this paper have previously interacted on numerous joint learning experience for their

students and determined that within the confines of their assigned courses, i.e., Educational Administration 701 - Analysis of Teacher Behaviors and Curriculum and Instruction 313 - Principles of Teaching High School, the opportunity existed to provide viable learning experiences for both student populations. It is interesting to note that Wenger and Hornyak (1999) suggested that "...a shift in the common role of teachers from providers of information to the more facilitating role suggested by Socrates: midwife to students pregnant with thoughts" was essential if higher levels of learning were to occur. Thus, the authors' orientation to the concept of integrated thematic instruction and commitment to the value of interaction between the two noted departments within the School of Education at the University of Southern Mississippi were supported.

Our efforts to provide both levels of students with effective and best practice grounded educational pedagogy were further supported by Wenger and Hornyak (ibid) in their statement that "In response to these challenges, management educators are increasingly exploring multiple ways to craft more effective learning experiences....In all these forms, the common thread is increased collaboration among professors and stronger linkages across topics." The notion of bringing both undergraduate future students together with graduate students, who aspired to be school administrators was well aligned with Argyris and Schon's (1978) contention that "As educators, we must help students learn how to learn."

This commitment to joint-departmental interaction in the training of future teachers and administrators led to our attempt to design and plan common experiences that would benefit both student populations to be served. Indeed,

these efforts were further augmented by Mill's (1998) when he proclaimed that "Active learning is bolstered by an approach that emphasized creative problem solving...and critical thinking." This commitment first led to our efforts to bring to both parties an awareness and appreciation of the effect that expectancy theory has had on how instruction has been delivered and should currently be delivered within the school setting. Next, we became aware of the need to increase the awareness level and skill of future principals in how to find, induct, and support teacher actions to effect the Era 3 expectation that "All children can learn and All children will learn." Concomitantly, these efforts led us to designing a learning opportunity that would allow the students in both programs to gain insight, experience, and skills in conducting interviews and being interviewed.

To this design we first concentrated on causing graduate students in the "Analysis of Teacher Behaviors" course to focus on what characteristics / traits they felt "effective" teachers exhibited. These students were also expected to provide a rationale for each characteristic / trait identified. Next, they were charged with developing a series of potential interview questions that would aide them in screening potential candidates for these desired qualities. To further solidify their focus, students were expected to create desired "scripted" responses, i.e., a potential song or theme they desired to hear qualified interviewees espouse. Time was spent in working with these students to explore the concept and processes associated with conducting panel interviews by administrators. Finally, we worked with the graduate students (future and practicing administrators) to design a record keeping device for recording individual panelist observations, as well as providing a consensus panel evaluation for each future teacher to receive

(See Appendix A for copy of Interview Rating Form).

In the Curriculum and Instruction Secondary 313 course - The Principles of Teaching High School, our students are normally second semester juniors who are only one year away from student teaching. In keeping with the INTASC standards, the grounding of our educational program, students actively participate in very reflective practices including a philosophy of education essay that essentially will be one that will be turned in prior to student teaching and a media analysis of popular films focusing on teachers' personalities and related classroom instruction. So, the interview activity for these students is another opportunity to participate in a trial run of an event that is sure to happen for them (perhaps on numerous occasions) in the near future. This event, when their philosophies affecting their instructional beliefs and practices are put to the test, will greatly determine whether or not they attain employment as a teacher. In addition, the person holding the trump card is normally the building principal where the teaching vacancy exists. Thus, the interview activity has an extremely important purpose for these students. Through this mock interview, they have actually been able to voice their educational beliefs, predict their responses to various situations such as those involving classroom management, and determine those methodologies that they feel will work best for them. This interview process is also an opportunity for them to make the distinction between generic statements that have no substantiation and those beliefs that are transformed into sound educational practices. Rather than receiving a traditional grade for this activity, the undergraduate students receive a ranking based on the administrative panel's perception of the student's beliefs, philosophy, and potential skills exhibited

during the actual interview. See Appendix B for a sampling of the types of comments and observations provided by the graduate student interview panels to the CIS 313 undergraduate student participants.

Midway through the Spring semester of 1999, we scheduled a series of future and practicing principal panel interviews of the undergraduate students from the Curriculum and Instruction 313 course on a Saturday morning. Three interview panels were established in three different rooms within the School of Education Building and the undergraduate, future teachers were interviewed over a four hour span of time. Interview panels met with students, who were grouped around specific teaching content areas to insure that the panels would assess candidates within these content specific areas. In the end, the administrative panels prepared for each interviewee an evaluation rating form to provide individual feedback to each future teacher participant on their observed strengths and possible areas that they were perceived needing to further enhance prior to their graduation from the teacher education program. Additionally, each interview panel developed a composite interview rating / ranking of all interviewees within each content specific area for the authors' review. This composite ranking detailed which candidate was judged the first, second, or third choice for the hypothetical teaching vacancy and what this ranking was based upon.

Since the interviews were held on a Saturday morning, the interview process was not a requirement for the 40 CIS 313 students enrolled in the spring semester. Many of our students are both nontraditional and commuters, with some traveling as far as 80 - 100 miles one-way to attend classes. Thus, this

opportunity was optional; but we were quite pleased when the response for the activity was so strong. However, even those who could not participate in the Saturday interviews were included in the interview discussion that was built into the class period prior to the actual interviews. In this discussion we focused on typical interview expectations such as manner of dress and conduct in conjunction with professional expectations. We talked about questions that might be asked and various methods of response. At this point, we did not share with the undergraduate future teachers that they would be ranked for these hypothetical vacancies, but instead explained to them various ways that they could be judged. Normally a person being interviewed in an initial interview will not walk into the interview aware of the format. As a former head of a high school English department and a school superintendent we talked about our own experiences as the interviewer and the strengths that we desired and subsequently looked for in potential faculty members. We also talked about our own interviewing experiences as the interviewee. In addition, we encouraged these students to share their own thoughts about and experiences with interviews. See Appendix C for examples of undergraduate student comments and/or concerns prior to and following the interview experience.

Our efforts to bring to both the undergraduate future teachers and the graduate students in educational administration a realistic, worldly valuable experience that allowed them to risk and simultaneously learn and grow is obviously grounded in team teaching across disciplines and flies in the face of Winn and Messenheimer-Young's (1995) observation that, "Although team teaching has been used in education courses, the partners are often teachers in the

same subject." The reader is encouraged to look at Appendix D for a sampling of graduate educational administration student reactions to this learning experience. As presented within this paper the concept of cross-discipline teaching can bear fruit and we strongly encourage others within our disciplines to join us and experience its benefits for students.

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Appendix A

Interview Rater Data Sheet

Teaching Field

Low | IV III II I | High
Rater's Evaluation

Name _____ Major _____ Minor _____

School _____ Level: 1st Choice _____
Level: 2nd Choice _____

Male _____ Female _____ Level: 3rd Choice _____

| | Low | | | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Appearance | | | | |
| 2. Voice | | | | |
| 3. Communicative Ability | | | | |
| 4. Knowledge of Subject(s) | | | | |
| 5. Personal Attributes (poise, enthusiasm) | | | | |
| 6. Apparent interest in children | | | | |
| 7. Professional Attitude | | | | |
| 8. | | | | |
| 9. | | | | |
| 10. Potential to succeed as a teacher | | | | |

Extra curricular interest and ability _____

_____

Additional Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

Reason for Recommendation _____

_____

_____

_____

Date _____ Rated by _____

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Appendix B

Interview Feedback Comments from

Educational Administration Student Panel

Participants to the Undergraduate Student

Interview Participants

1. Jamie will make an excellent teacher. She has a passion for teaching and children. She knows what she wants and goes after it. A born teacher.
2. Needs to become aware of educational trends and terminology. Also needs to exhibit a passion for teaching.

3. Top rated candidate. Enthusiastic, creative, bright,and has an aura of self-confidence and an ability to handle secondary classroom challenges.

4. Neatly dressed but too casual. Needs more background in current research

5. Early for the interview! Musically talented, fairly comfortable with technology. Good candidate with high potential.

6. Needs to be more specific and attentive to current instructional strategies, issues in education, etc. Was not convincing of content knowledge.

7. Seemed timid, excellent knowledge of subject area. Need to show your confidence. Made a very good first impression, will be a fine teacher. This individual understood the classroom and its requirements.

8. Needs to improve her technology skills and has a verbal habit of saying "Ya know" frequently. Needs to focus on specific Math projects, add to her teaching portfolio, and her posture needs to improve.

9. Needs to be more specific in her career goals; yet, shows signs of being a good teaching candidate.

10. A little more enthusiasm is needed. Suggest she add more specific teaching lessons to her teaching portfolio. Was very soft spoken.

11. Very knowledgeable about connections between Math and Music. Very good strategies for maintaining good student discipline. Outstanding qualifications.

12. Needs more exposure to current research in instructional delivery. Also, needs to formulate personal goals.

Appendix C

Undergraduate Student Participant

Comments Prior to and Following

the Panel Interview Experience

## Prevailing Comments Prior to the Interview Experience

1. Appearance

   "What should I wear" "Will it matter since it's a mock interview?"

2. Professional Attitude

   "If I don't dress professionally, will they take me as seriously?" "Will they ask questions pertaining to my educational philosophy -- should I reread my philosophy so I'll know how to answer questions such as those?"

3. Content Knowledge of Secondary Subject

   "Will they ask me specific content knowledge questions?" "Will my interview be less impressive if I don't know everything about my subject?" "How should I go about preparing myself for content based questions?" "Do you think they'll ask me questions about my content area at all?"

4. Professional Practices

   "What will they want to know about a classroom management plan?" "Will they ask me specific questions concerning classroom management?" "Will they ask me how I plan to teach my classes?' "Since I've never taught before, how can I adequately answer questions about something I've never really practiced before (completely on my own)?"

## Prevailing Concerns Expressed Following the Interview Experience

1. Beliefs about Diversity

> "I don't think I adequately answered the questions surrounding sociocultural issues." "I don't think I conveyed a clear picture of how I view the diversity issue." I don't think I showed that I know how to address diverse cultures in my classroom."

2. Incorporation of Technology

> "When they asked me how I would use technology in my classroom, I don't think I was explicit enough." "The technology question threw me because I really don't know all the technology related options that are out there for my subject area." "We don't cover diversity or technology in our content classes."

3. Classroom Management

> "Does collaborative work fall into the classroom management area?" "I had a hard time being specific, but I relied on my beliefs. I just hope the beliefs were in line."

4. Professional Attitudes

> "I felt good that I was dressed nicely." "They wanted to know about my university activities and how they would relate to teaching secondary students." "They asked if I belonged to any fraternities associated with education or any other honors groups."

5. The Scores Themselves

> "I didn't know that I would actually be ranked following the interview -- but it makes sense." "The ranking makes me nervous and I guess that's normal." "I'm afraid I didn't look as professional and that might mess up my ranking."

Appendix D

Sampling of Educational Administration

Graduate Student Reactions to This

Learning Experience

1. "This simulation was one of the most salient and rewarding experiences in graduate school because it allowed both the graduate and undergraduate students to hone their interview skills in a nonthreatening environment. Participating undergraduate students were rewarded by immediate feedback from a graduate student interview team whose sole purpose was to help the undergraduate student be successful. The interview team had an agreed upon list of questions which it asked of the interviewee. After the interview ended, the interviewee left the room, and the team commenced a discussion of the strengths and challenges of the student. The student was then called back to the room, and the team began a two-way communication with the student which consisted of positive reinforcements and suggestions for enhancing particular areas. Not only did this experience bolster the educational leadership skills of graduate students, but it also gave invaluable interviewing skills to the participating educational undergraduate students."

2. "I found the mock interview exercise to be extremely useful and edifying for several reasons. First, as a veteran teacher with almost no experience as an interviewer, this provided me with the invaluable opportunity to 'sit on the other side', i.e., actually construct and conduct an interview, as opposed to being the one interviewed. Second, as an aspiring teacher trainer, I was afforded the opportunity to meet and 'interrogate' several student teachers, and discover their concerns, educational experiences, and future plans and aspirations. Because these are the people I hope to be educating in the very near future, the insights and information I gleaned from meeting and talking with them was enlightening, and will prove quite useful. Third, because I have had almost no experience as an administrator, this was also an opportunity for me to switch mental gears, and approach a common situation from the perspective of an administrator, rather than from my long-held teacher mindset. Also, I had the chance to collaborate with several of my classmates who are seasoned administrators, and view, firsthand, how they conduct themselves and address their concerns in an interview situation.

   Overall, this exercise provided me with opportunities (and practice / rehearsal) that I had not had before, nor would I have had without such an innovative and pragmatic approach. I strongly recommend that this particular element of the course become a staple for both EDA 701 and the corresponding C & I 313 classes of teachers in training. All parties involved gain invaluable, albeit mock, experience from such a 'dress rehearsal', not the least of which was the chance to make what could be fatal errors, gaffs and faux pas in an interview situation, without the risk

or threat of losing a real employment opportunity. In short, this provided a risk free rehearsal and critique for all involved, as well as ensuring that their next interview will not be their first. I see no down side or negative aspect whatsoever in this practice. To the contrary, I can see no excuse for not making such a learning experience mandatory for both teachers and administrators at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Keep up the good work guys! And thanks for the experience."